

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN McCAIN
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
March 17, 1998

Thank you. This hearing is another in the Committee's series to examine issues related to tobacco control legislation.

Today, we will focus on the issue of FDA's regulation of tobacco, and on the issue of smokeless or "chewing" tobacco.

The scope of FDA regulation over tobacco is a pivotal issue with respect to the overall settlement measure. It's important for the Committee to understand the scope of FDA's authorities and how it relates to the other elements of tobacco legislation, particularly with respect to youth smoking.

We will also focus carefully on the issue of smokeless tobacco. This type of tobacco product, known also as spit tobacco or chew, is addressed in the proposed tobacco settlement.

While patterns in usage by youth, pricing, marketing and the biological effects for smokeless tobacco differ somewhat from cigarette smoking, smokeless tobacco is a serious and substantial health concern. We will hear from the Center for Disease Control regarding the science behind these health effects. We will also hear from Mr. Joe Garagiola.

Joe is a revered American and a sports role model of the highest order. He has dedicated himself to raising public awareness about the health risks of smokeless tobacco, and is focusing particularly on its prevalence in the game of baseball.

As part of his crusade, Joe is visiting every single Major League camp this Spring to spread the word. He has held clinics for Little League coaches and continues to be an outspoken public health advocate on this issue.

Spring training and the impending start of the professional baseball season is a particularly apt time to focus on the issue of smokeless tobacco. Baseball has had a longstanding love affair with this product. Unfortunately, this has served to dramatically increase its popularity among youth.

We all know the influence professional athletes have on young people. Whether sports figures find it convenient or not--the fact remains, they are role models. Some of them are excellent role models, others very poor role models. Mr. Garagiola is one of our best. His cessation campaign in baseball will surely have an impact not just on baseball but on young people and society as a whole, and I just want to take this opportunity to publicly thank him.

We are also privileged this morning to have Senator Jeffords here to discuss his views on tobacco legislation, particularly on issues related to the FDA. Sen. Jeffords has been a staunch and courageous leader on this issue, and we are grateful he is here to share his insights with the Committee. We appreciate the opportunity to work with him in the ongoing effort to craft an effective and realistic tobacco bill that will achieve our prime objective--the dramatic reduction of tobacco use by youth. Thank you Senator Jeffords.

I appreciate all of our witnesses joining us today and look forward to your testimony, and to the discussion and questions that follow.

Before we begin, I want to mention that the Committee will hold another hearing on Thursday where we will hear from the Nation's Governors; as well as Constitutional lawyers and financial experts to discuss vital aspects of tobacco legislation.

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